

O P 190243Z DEC 89  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE  
ALL OECD CAPITALS  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
INFO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS PRIORITY  
XMT USINT HAVANA

UNCLAS STATE 401887

FOR AMBASSADORS AND CHARGES

E.O. 12356: N/A

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SUBJECT: PANAMA: SHARING THE FACTS ON ATTACKS BY NORIEGA  
FORCES ON U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL

INFORM CONSULS ALSO FOR USEC/USOECN/USIAEA

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

¶1. (LOU) THERE FOLLOWS AN ACCOUNTING OF BASIC  
FACTS CONCERNING THE DECEMBER 16-17 INCIDENTS IN  
PANAMA IN WHICH A U.S. MILITARY OFFICER WAS SHOT  
AND KILLED AND ANOTHER BEATEN BY THE PANAMA DEFENSE  
FORCES (PDF). THE NORIEGA REGIME IS ALREADY  
EMBARKED ON A CAMPAIGN OF DISINFORMATION WHICH THE  
U.S. GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO VIGOROUSLY COUNTER.  
ACTION REQUESTED: DEMARCHES SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN  
BY ACTION ADDRESSEES WITH HOST GOVERNMENT, LOCAL  
MEDIA AND DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE  
WIDE DISSEMINATION OF THE FACTS. INFO ADDRESSEES  
MAY ALSO DRAW ON AS APPROPRIATE. (ALSO SEE PARA 4.)

¶2. (U) THESE UNPROVOKED ACTIONS BY THE PDF COME IN THE  
WAKE OF NORIEGA'S LATEST MEASURE TO CREATE A FACADE FOR  
HIS CONTINUING CAMPAIGN OF SUPPRESSION OF THE PANAMANIAN  
PEOPLE. ON DECEMBER 15, AN UNELECTED ASSEMBLY OF  
PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAND-PICKED BY NORIEGA-WITHOUT ANY  
LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR, INDEED, POPULAR  
LEGITIMACY--DECLARED THAT PANAMA IS IN A STATE OF WAR WITH  
THE U.S. AND PROCLAIMED NORIEGA AS CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT.  
THESE ACTIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE AS THE REGIME HAS BECOME  
FURTHER ISOLATED INTERNATIONALLY, UNDERScoreD IN NOVEMBER  
BY THE CONDEMNATION OF THE NORIEGA REGIME BY THE GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES AND THE  
DISINVITATION OF THE PDF FROM THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF  
THE AMERICAN ARMIES.

¶3. (U) BEGIN BACKGROUND:

MEMBERS OF THE PANAMANIAN DEFENSE FORCES OPENED FIRE ON A  
CAR CARRYING FOUR U.S. MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE EVENING OF  
DECEMBER 16, KILLING ONE AMERICAN SERVICEMAN AND INJURING  
ANOTHER. A THIRD U.S. MILITARY OFFICER, WHO WITNESSED  
THE EVENT, WAS DETAINED AND BEATEN BY THE PDF.

EARLIER IN THE EVENING, THE FOUR OFF-DUTY OFFICERS LEFT  
THE U.S. ARMY BASE AT FORT CLAYTON, UNARMED, IN CIVILIAN  
CLOTHING, AND DRIVING IN A PRIVATELY OWNED CAR, HEADING  
FOR DINNER IN A POPULAR DOWNTOWN PANAMA CITY RESTAURANT.  
ON THEIR WAY DOWNTOWN, THEY GOT LOST AND UNINTENTIONALLY  
DROVE ONTO AVENUE A. NEAR THE PANAMA DEFENSE FORCE'S  
HEADQUARTERS INSTEAD OF FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE WHICH  
CONNECTS U.S. MILITARY BASES.

AT 9:05PM ON DECEMBER 16, PANAMA TIME, THEY CAME TO A PDF  
ROADBLOCK AND WERE STOPPED BY ABOUT FIVE UNIFORMED MEMBERS  
OF THE PDF. A CROWD OF 30 TO 40 CIVILIANS, SPOTTING THE  
U.S. LICENSE PLATES, SWARMED TOWARD THE CAR. THE PDF  
MEMBERS REACHED THROUGH THE OPEN CAR WINDOWS, TUGGING AT  
THE SERVICEMEN'S CLOTHES AND SEAT BELTS, AND OPENED SOME  
OF THE CAR DOORS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PULL THE AMERICANS FROM  
THEIR CAR.

THE FEW CARS AHEAD OF THE AMERICANS AT THE ROADBLOCK WERE WAVED ON, AND ONE OF THE U.S. OFFICERS ASKED IN SPANISH WHY THE AMERICANS WERE BEING SINGLED OUT. NO ANSWER WAS GIVEN. THE DRIVER OF THE CAR SAW THAT THE PDF WEAPONS -- AK-47'S AND AUTOMATIC RIFLES - HAD BEEN LOADED AND AIMED AT THE AMERICANS. FEARING FOR THEIR SAFETY, THEY CLOSED THE WINDOWS AND DROVE AWAY, PAST THE ROADBLOCK.

AS THE CAR SPED AWAY, PDF SOLDIERS OPENED FIRE ON THE AMERICANS. ONE OF THE U.S. OFFICERS WAS WOUNDED AND ANOTHER WAS GRAZED AT THE ANKLE BY A BULLET. THEY DROVE TO GORGAS ARMY HOSPITAL, ABOUT FIVE BLOCKS FROM THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND HEADQUARTERS AT QUARRY HEIGHTS, WHERE THE WOUNDED OFFICER DIED ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER ARRIVING. THE NAMES OF THE VICTIMS HAVE NOT YET BEEN RELEASED, PENDING NOTIFICATION OF THEIR NEXT OF KIN.

A U.S. NAVY LIEUTENANT AND HIS WIFE HAD BEEN STOPPED IN THEIR CAR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR BEFORE THE FOUR OFFICERS ARRIVED, AT THE SAME CHECKPOINT ON AVENUE A. THEY GOT LOST AFTER DINING OUT WHILE HEADING HOME TO THE U.S. NAVAL STATION AT RODMAN, ON THE WEST BANK OF THE PANAMA CANAL NEAR HOWARD AIR FORCE BASE. PDF SOLDIERS STOPPED THEIR CAR, ASKED FOR THEIR IDENTIFICATION CARDS, AND TOLD THEM TO PULL OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE STREET UNTIL THEIR IDENTIFICATION WAS CHECKED.

WHILE WAITING IN THE CAR, THE COUPLE SAW THE FOUR AMERICANS ARRIVE AND LATER WITNESSED THE PDF SOLDIERS RAISE THEIR WEAPONS AND AIM AT OFFICERS' CAR AS IT STARTED TO SPEED AWAY. THE COUPLE SAID THE PDF THEN BEGAN TO FIRE AT THE OFFICERS' CAR.

AFTER THE SHOOTING, THE PDF MEMBERS RETURNED TO THE WAITING NAVY OFFICER AND HIS WIFE. THEY TOOK THE COUPLE TO A NEARBY PDF OFFICE, BLINDFOLDED THEM WITH MASKING TAPE, AND DROVE THEM IN THE BACK OF A PICKUP TRUCK TO ANOTHER LOCATION, WHICH THE NAVY OFFICER BELIEVED TO BE THE PDF HEADQUARTERS. THE COUPLE WAS INTERROGATED FOR ABOUT FOUR HOURS.

DURING THE QUESTIONING, THE NAVAL OFFICER WAS REPEATEDLY BEATEN AND KICKED IN THE GROIN AND HEAD. HE WAS TOLD HE WOULD BE KILLED IF HE DID NOT PROVIDE INFORMATION ON HIS DUTIES AND HIS UNIT. HIS WIFE WAS SLAMMED AGAINST A WALL WITH SUCH FORCE THAT HER HEAD WAS CUT. AFTER STANDING AT THE WALL FOR HALF AN HOUR, WITH HER ARMS ABOVE HER HEAD, SHE COLLAPSED ONTO THE FLOOR. SHE WAS ALSO SEXUALLY THREATENED BY PDF SOLDIERS.

FOUR HOURS AFTER THEY WERE STOPPED, THE NAVAL OFFICER AND HIS WIFE WERE ESCORTED BY THE PDF TO FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE THREE BLOCKS AWAY AND RELEASED. THEY ARRIVED AT THE NAVAL SECURITY OFFICE AT RODMAN ABOUT 2:15AM, DECEMBER 17, WHERE THEY PROVIDED STATEMENTS.

THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND IMPOSED PERSONNEL MOVEMENT LIMITATION "D" ABOUT 9:50PM ON DECEMBER 16, DIRECTING ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR DEPENDENTS TO STAY OUT OF PUBLIC AREAS IN PANAMA. SECURITY AT ALL U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WAS IMMEDIATELY ENHANCED TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF U.S. PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES.

SOUTHERN COMMAND AND U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE UNWARRANTED USE OF DEADLY FORCE BY THE PDF.

THE PDF'S PATTERN OF HARRASSMENT OF AMERICANS HAS NOW RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF A UNITED STATES SERVICEMAN, THE BEATING OF A NAVAL OFFICER, AND THE HARASSMENT OF HIS WIFE.

GENERAL NORIEGA HAS NOW BRUTALIZED THE PEOPLE OF PANAMA, CRACKED DOWN ON HIS OWN CIVILIANS AND MILITARY ALIKE AFTER THE LAST COUP ATTEMPT, DESIGNATED HIMSELF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTRY, AND DECLARED A STATE OF WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES. THESE ACTIONS HAVE CREATED A CLIMATE OF AGGRESSION THAT PUTS AMERICAN LIVES AT RISK. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE UNITED STATES.

END BACKGROUND.

¶4. FOR ACTION ADDRESSEES: IN ORDER TO IMPRESS ON THE GOVERNMENTS OF ACTION ADDRESSEES THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF THESE ACTIONS BY THE NORIEGA REGIME, THE SECRETARY HAS ASKED THAT ACTION ADDRESSEES MAKE THE DEMARCHE AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL.

BAKER